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JULY '96 99



EXCALIBUR

SPECIAL
ANNOUNCEMENT
UPDATE INSIDE!

ALAS,
A POOR
DOUG ROCK

PROFESSIONAL

DIRECT EDITION



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THE MUIR ISLAND
MEDICAL RESEARCH
STATION, IN THE
DEAD OF NIGHT.

PETE WISDOM SPEAKS,
QUIET AND PAINFULLY.

WARREN ELLIS WRITER CASEY JONES PENCILER
TOM SIMMONS INKER ARIANE LENSCHOEK COLORIST

IF IT'S
SCRATCH
THAT KIDNAPPED
DOUGLOCK,
DOUGLOCK'S
PROBABLY
DEAD.

I KNEW
SCRATCH WHEN
I WORKED AT BLACK
AIR, IN BRITISH
INTELLIGENCE.

THEY
KEPT FOUR
OR FIVE MUTANT
OPERATIVES LIKE
ME AND HIM.
ONCE.

WE WORKED
DIFFERENTLY.

OH, WE
BOTH DID THE
ESPIONAGE WORK
FOR THEM...
KILLED PEOPLE, IN
THE LINE OF
DUTY.

TOO MANY
PEOPLE.

I KILLED
PEOPLE
WHO WERE
KILLERS.

THEY
WERE ALREADY
"IN THE
LIFESTYLE", YOU
KNOW?

THEY
KNEW THE
SCORE.

MALIBU ENHANCEMENT RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT LETTERS
SUZANNE GAFFNEY EDITOR BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF

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SCRATCH
KILLED
ANYTHING
THAT
MOVED.

"ON ONE OPERATION, HE HAD TO RETRIEVE AN ALIEN ARTIFACT BURIED IN METEOR ROCK THAT'D FALLEN OUTSIDE A REMOTE COUNTRY SCHOOL IN NORFOLK. THERE WERE PEOPLE IN THE SCHOOL.

"I BUMPED INTO HIM IN THE BLACK AIR HQ THE NEXT DAY. I'D HEARD ALL ABOUT IT.

"THE ARROGANT TOERAG SMILED AT ME, AND SAID THAT'S THE WAY YOU DO IT."

"HIS MUTANT TALENT WAS IN VOLTCASTING -- ELECTRICAL ATTACK. I KNEW HE NEEDED A FEW SECONDS TO CONCENTRATE TO USE HIS POWER.

"HE KILLED THEM."

"SO I DIDN'T GIVE THEM TO HIM."

"I DECIDED NOT TO STOP WITH PUNCTURING HIS LUNG."

"I'D TORN HALF OF HIS FACE OFF BEFORE THEY DRAGGED ME OFF HIM."

"I DIDN'T USE MY POWERS."

"I SHOULD'VE INCINERATED HIS BRAIN."





IT MEANS 'PAYMENT',
TRANSFER OF
FUNDS, LIKE
THAT. WHY?

THESE ARE
PRINTOUTS OF
THE FILES KITTY
STOLE FROM THE
ACQUISITION
STATION.

THIS ONE
LISTS 'EMOLUMENTS'
TO MEMBERS OF
PARLIAMENT.

YOU'RE
JOKING.
LET
ME SEE
THAT!

GAWD
ALMIGHTY, THEY
WERE TRAFFICKING
BRIBE MONEY THROUGH
THE ACQUISITION
STATION.

THIS IS THE
CASH THAT PAID FOR
THE VOTE APPROVING BLACK
AIR'S TAKEOVER OF THE
WEIRD HAPPENINGS
ORGANIZATION.



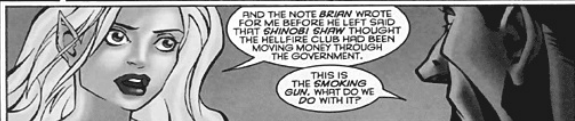
BUT IT SAYS HERE THAT THE
MONEY ORIGINATED FROM
'THE EARL OF BUTE
SOCIETY'...

NEXT TIME I'M
IN LONDON, I'LL BUY
YOU SOME HISTORY
BOOKS. THE EARL OF
BUTE WAS A FOUNDER
OF THE ORIGINAL 8TH
CENTURY HELLFIRE
CLUB.

THIS IS A
STOREFRONT,
A COVER
NAME.



AND AUSTRAIRIE
STUART, EX-W.N.O.,
SAID THAT IT WAS THE
HELLFIRE CLUB THAT
PAID FOR THE
BRIBES.



AND THE NOTE BRIAN WROTE
FOR ME BEFORE HE LEFT SAID
THAT SHINOBI SHAW THOUGHT
THE HELLFIRE CLUB HAD BEEN
MOVING MONEY THROUGH
THE GOVERNMENT.

THIS IS
THE SMOKING
GUN. WHAT DO WE
DO WITH IT?





AT THE SAME
TIME, THERE
IS A GREAT
FIRE IN LONDON.

IT LEAPT UP FROM THE
DEVELOPMENTS ON THE
RIVER, PAINTING THE
CANARY WHARF BUILDING
IN RED -- AND IS VISIBLE
EVEN ACROSS THE CITY --

-- FROM THE
WINDOW OF BRIAN
BRADDOCK'S
HOTEL SUITE.

BRADDOCK WAS ONCE A
SUPERHERO, AND HIS SKIN
TINGLES WITH THREAT AT
THE SIGHT OF IT.

BUT HE IS HERE FOR
EXCALIBUR TO
INVESTIGATE THE
WEALTHY ELITE OF THE
LONDON HELLFIRE
CLUB, SO HE TRIES
TO PUT THE INSTINCT
AWAY AND THINK...

A COLUMN
OF FIRE. IT'S
FADING NOW, LIKE
IT WAS NEVER
THERE...

THEY'VE
STARTED, MISTER
BRADDOCK.

AND
NOTHING WILL
EVER BE THE
SAME.

I THINK
WE'RE WAY
OVERDUE FOR SOME
EXPLANATION.
TIME. DON'T YOU,
SCRIBE?



THE
HELLFIRE
CLUB.

THIS IS
THE TESTING
STAGE OF
THEIR PLAN.

THEY
HAVE ACCESS
TO A POWER
SOURCE OF... OF
ULTIMATE
FORCE.

THEY HAD
JUST ESTABLISHED
A RADIO LINK BETWEEN
THE SOURCE AND THE RED
QUEEN, THE CLUB'S
MAGICIAN.

THEY
WERE SUPPOSED
TO WAIT UNTIL THE
PHYSICAL LINK HAD
BEEN LAID IN, BUT THE
RED KING HAS BEEN
PUSHING THE COURT
TO MOVE FASTER --
I SAID THAT HE'D
CHANGED.

HE
WAS ALWAYS
A CAUTIOUS
MAN...

I
HAVE TO
LEAVE.

THERE'LL
BE AN EMERGENCY
SESSION, AND AS SCRIBE
I MUST BE THERE TO
RECORD IT...

WHAT
POWER
SOURCE?

SOMETHING BENEATH
LONDON.

THE RED
QUEEN'S MAGIC
CAN ACCESS THE
POWER. SHE COULD
AFFECT THE ENTIRE
COUNTRY.

OR
ANY OTHER
COUNTRY.

I
SEE.

MURK ISLAND
THE COMMS
SUITE.

... YEAH,
I'M SURE YOU
NEED YOUR SLEEP,
JARDINE.

LISTEN...
NO, BLOODY
LISTEN.

I'M
ASSUMING
THIS LINE IS
SECURE.

NOW
YOU LISTEN
TO EVERYTHING
I SAY AND OBEY
IT LIKE IT WAS
THE WORD OF
GOD.

... OKAY.

THE LINE'S
HONEST.
YOU KNOW I
TRUST YOU,
PETE. GO
AHEAD.

IN A FEW
MOMENTS, YOU'RE
GOING TO GIVE ME THE
NUMBER OF A SECURE MODERN
LINE TO YOUR OFFICE, AND
WE'RE GOING TO SEND
YOUR COMPUTER
SOME FILES.

YOU'RE
GOING TO MAKE
HARD COPIES AND
BACK-UP COPIES, AND
GET OUT OF LONDON
WITH YOUR FAMILY
AND FRIENDS.

WHAT
ARE YOU
SENDING?

I MEAN, AS
HEAD OF CRIMINAL
INTELLIGENCE,
I CAN GET SOME
THINGS DONE,
BUT...

THAT
INCLUDES DOYLE
AND THE CROWN
BOYS -- YOU'LL
NEED 'EM.

I'M SENDING YOU PROOF THAT THE HELLFIRE
CLUB IS INFLUENCING PARLIAMENT
-- AND MILITARY INTELLIGENCE GROUPS,
SPECIFICALLY **BLACK AIR**.

Oh, THE
NUMBER.
RIGHT.

ONCE
YOU'RE OUT OF
TOWN, GET THAT
DATA TO ANYONE
WHO CAN
USE IT.

AND TELL THEM IT CAME FROM
EXCALIBUR. GIVE 'EM OUR
RESUME AND SOME EXCELLENT
REFERENCES FROM THE
LONDON LAW-ENFORCEMENT
COMMUNITY.

BRING **BLACK
AIR** DOWN, REMOVE
PEOPLE FROM
GOVERNMENT, SEIZE
HELLFIRE CLUB
MEMBERS' ASSETS --
ANYTHING AND
EVERYTHING.

MOST
IMPORTANT --
LEAVE LONDON.
THIS
MORNING.

**BLACK
AIR** HAS TAKEN
ONE OF OUR
TEAMMATES, AND WE'RE
COMING FOR HIM.
IT COULD GET
MESSY.

BRING **BLACK
AIR** DOWN, REMOVE
PEOPLE FROM
GOVERNMENT, SEIZE
HELLFIRE CLUB
MEMBERS' ASSETS --
ANYTHING AND
EVERYTHING.



OKAY, KITTY, DIAL UP THAT MODERN NUMBER.



RINGS



IT'S ALWAYS BAD IF THE PHONE RINGS AFTER MIDNIGHT.



IT'S BRIAN... OH, IT'S YOU, WISDOM. OH, WELL.

LOOK, WE'VE VERY SERIOUS TROUBLE IN LONDON. EXCALIBUR SHOULD GET HERE RIGHT NOW TO PUT AWAY THE HELLFIRE CLUB.



*/%#&@!
YOUR TIMING STINKS, BRADDOCK!

I'VE JUST ARRANGED TO GIVE MY FRIENDS THE NIGHT TO...

NO, HOLD ON. THIS ISN'T JUST ABOUT ME...

LOOK, MUCH AS I HATE TO ADMIT IT TO YOU, BRADDOCK, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ASK KURT ABOUT THIS. HOLD THE LINE.



I'M ACTUALLY BECOMING A TEAM PLAYER.

SOMEBODY SHOOT ME...



BRIAN BRADDOCK WAITS, KNOWING THAT, IF WORST COMES TO WORST, HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO HANDLE THINGS HIMSELF.

HE DID, AFTER ALL, BRING A TOOL FOR THE JOB.

A CROSS LONDON, THE
HELLFIRE CLUB IS IN
EMERGENCY SESSION.

THE BLACK QUEEN,
ALSO, NOTES WITH
AMUSEMENT THAT
THE INNER CIRCLE
OF ROYALTY HAS
FINALLY SPLIT INTO
COLORS ---

-- BLACK
AGAINST
RED.

WE AGREED
THERE WOULD BE
CONSENT BETWEEN
ROYALTY ON THIS
PROJECT!

-- YOU
TESTED THE
PROJECT WITHOUT
CONSULTING MYSELF
OR THE BLACK
QUEEN?

HAVE YOU
BOTH GONE
INSANE?

IT WAS
NECESSARY
TO TEST THE PROJECT
QUICKLY.

I HAD
NO TIME TO TRAVEL
BARE LOOKING FOR
YOU, BLACK
KING ---

-- AND THE
BLACK QUEEN,
AS EVER, WAS
UNAVAILABLE
TO ME.

I'VE HAD MEN
HUNG BY THEIR ENTRAILS
FROM TOWER BRIDGE FOR
THINKING WHAT YOU
JUST SAID.

PLEASE.

POSTURE
LATER, WHEN
WE HAVE TIME
FOR IT.

IT
WAS VITAL
WE LEARN OF THE
PROJECT'S EFFICACY
IMMEDIATELY. WE
NOW KNOW THE LINK
IS WORKING.

WE HAVE A
WEAPON --

-- COMPUTER-
GUIDED
HELLFIRE.

I SUGGEST
WE ALL GO TO
THE PROJECT
SITE.

THE NEW
DEVELOPMENT I
ARRANGED SHOULD
BE COMPLETE
BY NOW.

1 THE BUILDING IS DISMISSED AS A FOLLY.

STANDING LIKE A NEEDLE IN THE DOCKLANDS AREA, IT COULD EASILY BE ONE OF THE MANY EIGHTIES-STYLISH OFFICE BLOCKS BUILT DURING THE ECONOMIC BOOMTIME...

...AND LEFT EMPTY WHEN THE BOOM PROVED HOLLOW.

THOSE IN THE KNOW CALL IT THE BLACKWALL, AND DO NOT GO THERE.

IT IS THE LONDON HEADQUARTERS OF BLACK AIR.

AH, OUR SERVANTS FROM BLACK AIR.

NICE OF YOU TO MEET US.

SCICLUNA, THREADGOLD, HOW ARE YOU?

WE'RE STILL THE HEADS OF BLACK AIR, AND NO-ONE'S SERVANTS, THANK YOU.

EXCUSE THREADGOLD, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN A LABOUR VOTER.

PLEASE -- ENTER THE NECKROMANTEION.

A NECROMANTEION IS A MAGICIAN'S WORKPLACE.

I THOUGHT IT APT.

AFTER ALL, OUR WORK INVOLVES MAGIC. MAGIC PERFORMED SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS AGO BY ROYALTY -- KING JAMES.

HE WROTE THE FAMOUS TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE, AND ALSO THE WORK OF DEMONOLOGY, THE MALLEUS MALEFICARUM.

THE FOUNDERS OF THE HELLFIRE CLUB HELD SOME OF HIS MORE PRIVATE WRITINGS, AS YOU KNOW.

EXCELLENT.

THE PHYSICAL LINK IS READY.

THE RADIO LINK TO OUR POWER SOURCE WAS WORKABLE, BUT IMPURE --

IT LIMITED THE AMOUNT OF ENERGY WE COULD TRANSFER.

AND THEN OUR FRIENDS IN BLACK AIR FOUND US ONE.

A SENTIENT MECHANICAL CREATURE WHO, OF NECESSITY, HAD TO PASS ENERGY THROUGH HIS BODY AT THE SPEED OF THOUGHT.

HOW ELSE, COULD HE THINK, OR MOVE?

ONCE WE UNRAVELLED HIM, HE WAS PERFECT FOR OUR NEEDS.

"THE RED QUEEN
CAN ACCESS THE
POWER AT THIS
PARTICULAR POINT.

"FROM HERE, THE
CREATURE'S BODY
EXTENDS DOWN INTO
THE GROUND --"

"-- AND DESCENDS
TO THE SOURCE.

"THERE, IT PLUGS
INTO THE INTERFACE
THAT SEBASTIAN
SHAW GAVE US --"

"CHIPS FROM A TRIDENT
THAT SUPPOSEDLY
ONCE BELONGED TO
THE DEVIL'S SON.

"IT INDUCES THE
FLOW OF POWER, SO
I GUESS IT'S TRUE."

THE CRYPT BENEATH
THE CITY SUDDENLY
SHUDDERS, WAVERS --
BECOMES TRANSPARENT.

INSIDE IS NOTHING
BUT FIRE, AND THE
SKETCH OF A SHAPE
THAT HAS NO RIGHT
BEING ON EARTH.

THERE IS
A ROAR --

AND THEN IT
ALL GOES
QUIET AGAIN.

MORNING IN LONDON.

BRIAN BRADDOCK HADN'T SLEPT.

HE'S BEEN THINKING ABOUT HIS FIGHTS, BIG OR SMALL. VERY FEW OF THEM MATTERED AS MUCH AS THE ONE COMING THIS MORNING.

KURT TOLD HIM TO STAY CLEAR OF THE HELLFIRE CLUB: THE FACT THAT THE SHAPESTERLING MUTANT MOUNTJOY COULD BE MASQUERADING AS ONE OF THEM WILL JUST HAVE TO WAIT.

BUT WHAT IF IT'S MOUNTJOY WHO'S BEEN ACCELERATING THE HELLFIRE CLUB'S PLANS?

IT'S THE RED KING WHO'S BEEN PUSHING THEM, IT'S THE RED KING WHOM THE SCRIBE SAID HAD CHANGED.

WHAT IF THE RED KING IS MOUNTJOY, TRYING TO ACCESS ALL THAT POWER FOR HIMSELF?

BRIAN HAS TO DO SOMETHING.

AND BRIAN NEEDS AN EDGE.

LUCKILY, HE BROUGHT ONE.

THIS WILL BE ALL THE EDGE HE NEEDS.



MORNING ON
MUIR ISLAND.

PLANS HAVE
BEEN MADE.

NONE OF THOSE PLANS
HAVE DAMPED DOWN
THE FEAR IN THEM.

OR THE HATE FOR THE
PEOPLE WHO STOLE
THEIR FRIEND FROM THEM.



THEY'RE A TEAM.
NO TIME TO BE
SCARED OR ANGRY.

THEY MOVE
AS ONE
TOWARDS
THE PLANE.



DON'T
GET YOURSELF
KILLED, OR EVEN
HURT, YOU
HEAR?

WOULDN'T
DARE, YOU'D
NEVER TALK
TO ME
AGAIN.



NO TIME TO SAY
THAT OTHER LITTLE
WORD, EITHER.

MORNING IN LONDON,
AND THE BLACK QUEEN
IS ON HER OWN BED.

SHE NEEDS LITTLE
SLEEP. AND THE
BOOK -- AN
OBSCURE TOME
ABOUT SPANISH
TORTURE -- IS
QUITE FASCINATING.

QUITE ABRUPTLY, SHE
IS AWARE OF A RIPPING
NOISE; SOMETHING
TEARING THROUGH HER
REALITY TO GET TO HER.



ONSLAUGHT.
Ms.
STEED.

SHE SHOWS JUST A LITTLE FEAR --
BECAUSE SHE KNOWS IT PIERCES
HIM, AND BECAUSE IN TRUTH IT IS
DIFFICULT TO SUPPRESS THE PRIMAL
TERROR HE CREATES.

SOON,
NOW, THERE
SHALL BE
A GATHERING.
ARE YOU
READY?

NO.
BUT
THAT
DOESN'T
MATTER,
DOES
IT?



MORNING IN
LONDON.

BUT THE LIGHT DOES
NOT INFECT THE
NECROMANTEION.

Uhm
PLEASE...
MY QUEEN...
MM... MY
MAGICIAN
QUEEN --
OHHA

SH, RED
KING.
NOW
YOU KNOW MY
MAGIC.

DO
YOU LOVE
MEP

WILL
YOU DIE
FOR
MEP

THEN
BAR THE
DOOR.

IF YOU
FAIL, YOU
SHALL NEVER
SEE ME
AGAIN.



HELLO,
LITTLE DEAD
BOY.



IT'S
FUNNY.
YES,
IT IS.

I WAS
NEVER
A PRETTY
GIRL.

CIRCUS
FOLK RARELY
ATE WELL IN MY
DAY, AND IT
SHOWED ON
ME.



BUT IN
THIS LAST
WHILE...
OH I'VE
GORGED.

I TOOK
THE SOUL SWORD,
AND USED IT TO KILL
EVERY MAGICIAN WHO
STOOD AHEAD OF ME ON
THE WINDING WAY, THE
PATH TO MAGICAL
POWER.

AND THEN,
WHEN I LEARNED
WHAT WAS UNDER
LONDON...

THE PROMISE
OF EVEN GREATER
POWER THAN WHAT
I ALREADY
HAD...



AS I
ACTIVATE THIS
LINK, I BECOME
GREAT.

YOU KNOW
WHAT THEY'LL SAY,
LITTLE BOY?

"WHO CARES
WHAT MARGALI
SZARDOS LOOKS
LIKE?"

THAT'S
WHAT THEY'LL
SAY.



"FOR SHE STRIPPED THE POWER OF A CAGED --"
-- WHAT?



MY, MY, MY HANDS --
I CAN'T FEEL MY HANDS --



-- IT'S HUNGRY, IT'S HUNGRY TOO --
-- I CAN'T CONTAIN IT -- THE LINK IS TOO PURE --



-- IT'S BEEN CAGED HUNGRY STARVING EVIL FOR CENTURIES --
THE LINK IS FUSED OPEN --
I CAN'T



CAN'T STOP IT.

LET IT OUT.



AND THE BLACKWALL CATCHES FIRE.



TERRIBLE FINGERS
REACH UP FROM THE
EARTH, GRASPING
FOR PEOPLE'S LIVES.



A DEMONIC VOICE
RINGS IN THE HEADS OF
THE LONDON PEOPLE,
SPEAKING DIRECTLY
TO THE HATE IN THEM.

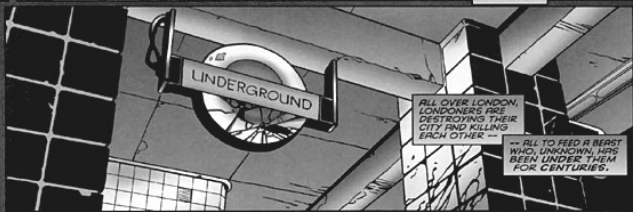


WITHIN
MOMENTS,
THE FIRES
BEGIN.

AND THE
MOBS.

AND THE
MURDER AND
DESTRUCTION.

LONDON
GOES MAD.



ALL OVER LONDON,
LONDONERS ARE
DESTROYING THEIR
CITY AND KILLING
EACH OTHER --

-- ALL TO FEED A BEAST
WHO, UNKNOWN, HAS
BEEN UNDER THEM
FOR CENTURIES.



THERE'S A DEVIL
UNDER LONDON
TOWN, AND HE'S
BEEN LOCKED
UP FOR FAR TOO
LONG.

IT IS EVIL THAT
SUSTAINS
THE DEMON.

FOR FAR TOO LONG,
HE HAS BEEN SUBSISTING
ON THE THIN ECHOES
OF LONDON MURDER,
LONDON CORRUPTION,
LONDON HATRED.

IN ONE SWEEP OF HIS
HAND, HE RELEASES THE
EVIL THAT SQUATS
IN EVERYONE'S HEAD.

HIS IMAGE
SCARS THE
SKY FOR AN
INSTANT.

AND THEN HE
RETURNS TO
HIS OPENED
CAGE, TO FEED
UPON HORROR.

AND
LONDON
BURNS.

TO BE CONCLUDED

**SPECIAL
ONSLAUGHT
UPDATE INSIDE!**

**SPECIAL
UNSLAUGHT
UPDATE INSIDE!**

CAUTION • CAUTION • CAUTION • CAUTION • CAUTION • CAUTION

UNSLAUGHT™ IS COMING

CAUTION • CAUTION • CAUTION • CAUTION • CAUTION • CAUTION

ONSLAUGHT™

**THE GREATEST THREAT EVER TO
FACE THE X-MEN IS COMING.**

AND WHEN HE FINISHES WITH THEM, THE REST OF
THE MARVEL UNIVERSE*
 IS HIS TARGET.

In case you missed them here are some important elements in the **ONSLAUGHT**® thus far.

...THE MIMIC.

X-Force™ #46

CALVIN RANKIN WAS AN ALL-AMERICAN KID WHOSE FATHER'S EXPERIMENTS GAVE HIM THE UNIQUE ABILITY TO "MIMIC" ANOTHER'S MUTANT POWER.

The Mimic disappears in Siberia after an explosive battle with X-Force.

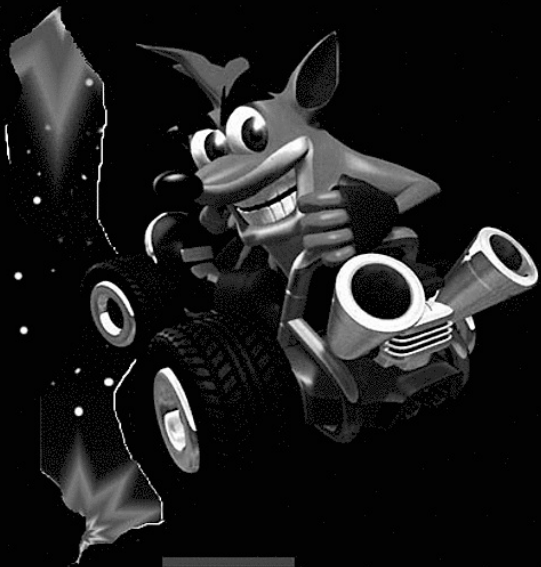
X-Men #46

An undercover Sentinel security augmentation facility mysteriously goes off-line. When Senator Kelly investigates and restores power, there is only one word programmed into the facility's computers:

ONSLAUGHT.

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REDFOX SCANS